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SECURING DEVICE AND METHODS OF USE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No.

5 60/446,701, filed on February 10, 2003, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

Valuable articles such as wallets, containing money, credit cards, personal keepsake items, and passports are often placed and carried within an individual's pocket. These articles
10 are generally not secured within the pocket so they may be easily lost or stolen as if they may slip out of an individual's pocket without detection. Accordingly, there is a need for a device for preventing the loss of items placed in a pocket or similar receptacle as well as securing items together and being so held.

SUMMARY

15 Exemplary embodiments disclosed herein are directed to fastening devices for releasably securing items such as, but not limited to, a wallet, a passport holder, toy, decorative item to a portion of clothing or within a pocket or other similar receptacle having at least one wall or a thin lining. Other exemplary embodiments may be used to releasably
20 secure various items to blankets, sheets, drapes, or other sheets of material.

According to one exemplary embodiment, the device may be composed of a fastener

and coupling structure. The fastener is composed of a first component that is reversibly
engagable with a second component. The first component may be fixed to at least one surface
of a portable carrying case and a second component is adapted to couple to a portion of the
coupling structure. Either or both components can be secured to moveable or non-moveable
5 components. The coupling structure is composed of a first portion and a second portion,
wherein a portion of an individual's article of clothing is reversibly securable between the first
portion and second portion of the coupling structure. Accordingly, the wallet may be secured
within a pocket and is easily accessed and/or removed from the pocket.

Another exemplary embodiment is directed to an individualized portable carrying case
10 that is securable within a pocket or other receptacle on an article of clothing. The portable
carrying case includes at least one surface defining a body, which is capable of holding one or
more items, wherein the body is sized to be held within a portion of an individual's article of
clothing. The portable carrying case may also include a means for reversibly coupling the
body to the individual's article of clothing.

15 In use, an individual may remove the first portion of the coupling from the second
portion of the coupling structure. The portable carrying case may then be inserted within a
pocket that is located on the article of clothing. A portion of the pocket, such as the pocket
lining, may be positioned between the first portion of the coupling structure and the second
portion of the coupling structure. The first portion of the coupling structure and the second
20 portion of the coupling structure are then coupled together thereby securing the portable
carrying case within the pocket.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment;

Figure 2 is an exploded side view of the exemplary embodiment of Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a side view of the exemplary embodiment of Figure 1 secured to a portion
5 of an article of clothing;

Figure 4 is a side view of the portable carrying case detached from the security device,
which is secured to a portion of an article of clothing;

Figure 5 is a perspective view of another exemplary embodiment; and

10 Figure 6 is a side view of the exemplary embodiment depicted in Figure 5.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The detailed description set forth below in connection with the appended drawings is intended as a description of exemplary embodiments and is not intended to represent the only
15 forms in which these embodiments may be constructed and/or utilized. The description sets forth the functions and the sequence of steps for constructing and operating the exemplary embodiments. However, it is to be understood that the same or equivalent functions and sequences may be accomplished by different embodiments that are also intended to be encompassed within the spirit and scope of the specification.

20 Turning now to the figures, Figure 1 illustrates a portable carrying case **100** having a security device **101**, **102** secured to at least one surface of the case **100**. Generally, the security device is composed of a fastener **101** that is reversibly engagable with a coupling structure **102**. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, the portable carrying case **100** may

be sized and configured to store a plurality of items that may be used to secure valuable items within a pocket, or the like. According to various exemplary embodiments, the portable carrying case **100** may be a wallet, a billfold, tri-fold, coin purse, credit card carrier, passport holder, or the like.

5 As shown in Figure 2, the portable carrying case **100** is provided with a fastener **101** that is coupled to at least one surface of the case **100**. The fastener **101** may be composed of a first portion **200** and a second portion **201**. The first **200** and second **201** portions of the fastener **101** are sized to mate and releasably engage one another. The first component **200** of the fastener the second component **201** of the fastener may be male and female snap buttons,
10 respectively, as shown in Figure 2. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, the fastener **101** may be any two-part coupling structure that can be reversibly attached and detached from one another. For instance, according to another exemplary embodiment, the fastener **101** may be two pieces of Velcro®. As shown in Figure 2, the second component **201** of the fastener is integral or otherwise permanently fixed to a first portion of the coupling structure **101**.

15 As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the coupling structure **101** may have a generally cylindrical body. However, as those skilled in the art will appreciate, the coupling structure **101** may have any shape known or used in the art. According to one exemplary embodiment, the first portion of the coupling structure **101** may be provided with threads **203** on the outer circumferential surface. In another exemplary embodiment, the first portion **101** of the
20 coupling structure may be provided with one or more protuberances (not shown) that extend away from the outer circumferential surface. The first portion **101** of the coupling structure

may be reversibly engagable with a second portion **102** of a coupling structure as shown in Figure 1.

The second portion **102** of the coupling structure may be a generally donut-shaped structure as shown in Figure 1. In an alternate embodiment, the second portion **102** of the coupling structure may have a plurality of shapes such as, but not limited to, a polygon, a triangle, an octagon, a pentagon, or other fanciful shapes. The second portion **102** of the coupling structure includes a through-bore (not shown) that is capable of engaging the threads **203** on the first portion **101** of the coupling structure **101**. That is, the through-bore may include threads (not shown) that correspond to the threads **203** on the first portion **101** of the coupling structure. In one exemplary embodiment, the threads may be constructed from a flexible and partially collapsible material so as to allow for variations in the thickness of the clothing material **300** or substrates secured between the first **101** and second portions **102** of the coupling structure.

In alternate embodiment, the second portion of the coupling structure **102** may be provided with a groove (not shown) that may engage one or more protuberances (not shown) on the first portion **101** of the coupling structure. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, the first portion and the second portion of the coupling structure may be reversibly coupled together via various reversible locking mechanisms known and developed in the art such as, but not limited to, tongue-and-groove or snap-fit systems.

According to the exemplary embodiment depicted in Figure 2, the first portion **101** and the second portion **102** of the coupling structure may be screwed together. When the first **101** and second portions **102** of the coupling structure are coupled together, there may be some

clearance (or play) between the two portions. This clearance allows for a portion of an individual's article of clothing **300** to be secured between the first portion and the second portion of the coupling structure when they are attached to one another.

In yet another exemplary embodiment, the first **101** and the second portion **102** of the coupling structure may be formed from a flexible material. The flexible material allows the coupling structure to compensate for a wider variation of the thickness of the clothing **300** or other substrates that may be secured between the first **101** and second portions **102** of the coupling structure.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate another exemplary embodiment of a security device **500**. The security device **500** is similar to the embodiment as depicted in Figures 1-4 with the exception of a plate **501** that may be positioned over the base of the first portion **101** of the coupling structure. In one exemplary embodiment, the plate **501** includes a through hole (not shown) that is adapted to be positioned and slide over the first portion **101** of the coupling structure. In another exemplary embodiment, the plate **501** is integral with the first portion **101** of the coupling structure. In use, the plate **501** can provide a rigid surface against which the second portion **102** of the coupling structure can be secured against when coupling the first portion **101** and the second portion **102** of the coupling structure together.

In use, the portable carrying case **100** may be secured to or within an article of clothing. For instance, according to one exemplary method, the portable carrying case **100** may be secured within a pocket **300** or other receptacle within an individual's clothing. In order to secure the portable carrying case **100** within a pocket, the second portion **102** or the outer portion of the coupling structure is removed from the first portion **101** of the coupling

structure. The portable carrying case **100** may then be inserted within a designated pocket **300** such that the first portion **101** of the coupling structure contacts a wall or lining of the pocket **300**. The second portion **102** of the coupling structure is then placed on the opposite side of the pocket wall **300** or pocket lining and is aligned with the first portion **101** of the coupling structure. Next, the second portion **102** of the coupling structure is then secured to the first portion **101** of the coupling structure. As a result, the pocket lining **300** or the wall of the pocket is secured between the first and second portion of the coupling structure as shown in Figure 3. Accordingly, the portable carrying case **100** is reversibly secured within the pocket.

When accessing the portable carrying case **100**, the case **100** may be detached from the pocket lining **300** pocket wall by detaching the first component **200** of the fastener from the second component **201** of the fastener as shown in Figure 4. After use, the case **100** may be reattached to the pocket lining **300** or pocket wall by coupling the first component **200** and the second component **201** of the fastener together.

In an alternate method, both the portable carrying case **100** and the pocket lining **300** may be pulled out from the pocket at the same time so that the contents of the portable carrying case **100** may be accessed. After use, the wallet **100** may then be reinserted into the pocket. Accordingly, the portable carrying case **100** is reversibly secured within a pocket as it is coupled to the pocket lining **300** or a wall of the pocket. The security device **101,102** associated with the portable carrying case **100** allows the case **100** to be secured within the pocket **300** without damaging the pocket or pocket lining and allows the portable carrying case **100** to be readily accessed.

In another exemplary method of use, the fastening device **100** may be used to secure a decorative item or toy to an item of clothing. According to various exemplary embodiments, the decorative item may be a pin, brooch, or other novelty item. The first portion of the fastener **200** may be coupled to the body of the decorative item or toy. The second portion of the fastener **201** and the coupling structure **101, 102** may be reversibly secured to a portion of a child's or adult's clothing according to the methods described above. Accordingly, an individual may readily add, remove, or change the toy or decorative item that may be secured to the article of clothing without damaging or altering the integrity of the clothing.

In yet another exemplary method of use, the fastening device **100** may be used to reversibly secure decorative items, or the like, to materials such as, but not limited to, sheets, blankets, drapes, or other pieces of material. In another exemplary method of use, the fastening device **100** may be used to secure various types of bedding materials together (e.g., sheet to blanket). That is, it is contemplated that the fastening device **100** may be used in any application where two items are to be reversibly secured together, wherein one item is a material that is substantially planar that may be secured between the first portion **101** and the second portion **102** of the coupling structure.

In closing, it is to be understood that the embodiments described herein are illustrative of the principles of the present invention. Other modifications that may be employed are within the scope of the invention. Thus, by way of example, but not of limitation, alternative configurations may be utilized in accordance with the teachings herein. Accordingly, the drawings and description are illustrative and not meant to be a limitation thereof.